

HOUSING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2020 - 2021

MESSAGE FROM COUNCILLOR BOB EVANS, CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING

Welcome to the annual report for the Housing Service area of Mid Devon District Council for 2020/2021. This report covers a period of time that staff and officers, within the housing service, faced many challenges.

Not only were the way individuals required to work affected, but the ability of how the team as a whole were able to assist our residents was impacted by numerous factors. Many of the challenges had never been faced before, and there was no manual to follow.

We should never forget that the situation wasn't simply an external issue, our staff were impacted both as individuals and as family members.

Their dedication, hard work and focus in assisting our residents made me proud to be associated with their endeavours. I hope that tenants as a whole are able to agree and endorse my feelings, and view the report against the background it was formulated.

Councillor Evans



WE WANT
TO HEAR
FROM
YOU

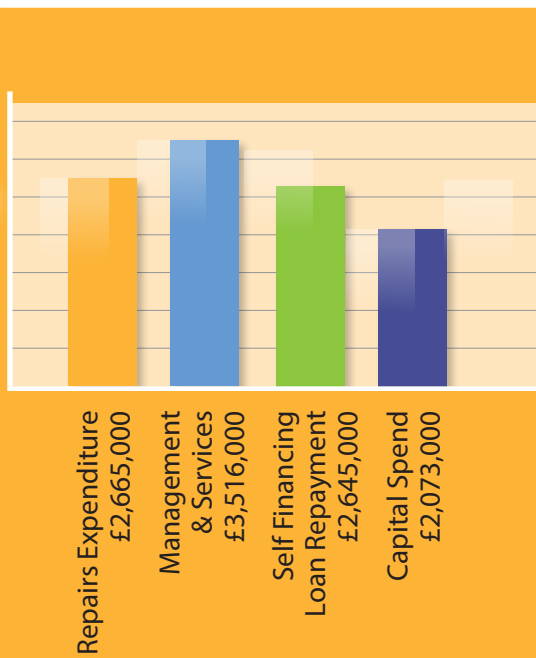
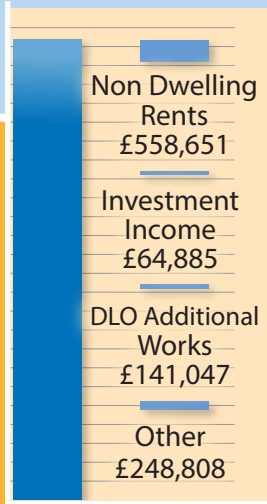
Please get in touch to share your views and to get involved in shaping the housing service.

Email: tenantinvolvement@middevon.gov.uk

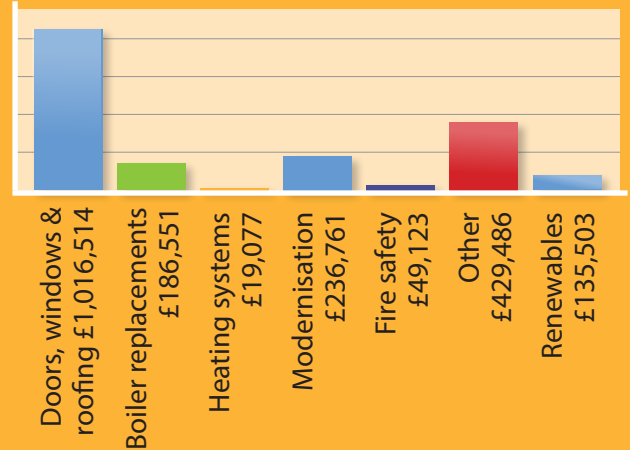
Telephone: 01884 255255

Mid Devon District Council's Performance for 2020 - 2021

Below we've provided some performance highlights for the year



Capital Expenditure was split as follows:



Income (dwelling rent) £12,325,000

Income (other) £1,014,000

Repairs Expenditure £2,665,000

Management & Services £3,516,000

Self Financing Loan Repayment £2,645,000

Capital Spend £2,073,000

Doors, windows & roofing £1,016,514

Boiler replacements £186,551

Heating systems £19,077

Modernisation £236,761

Fire safety £49,123

Other £429,486

Renewables £135,503

Home



Kitchen (Mi-Space)

89

Kitchens complete

(In-house team)

30

Kitchens upgraded



Bathrooms (Mi-Space)

9

Bathrooms

(In-house team)

37

Bathrooms upgraded



Heating Systems Installed (Planned Maintenance)

15

4 Gas Central Heating
11 Air Source Heat Pump



Davies Roofing

147

Roofs



Direct Labour Operative Scheme

106

Boilers



New Windows (Anglian)

203

Homes



Disabled Facility Grant works

63

Adaptations



External Homes Painted

370

Homes



Gas Servicing (Liberty Gas)

2205

Homes

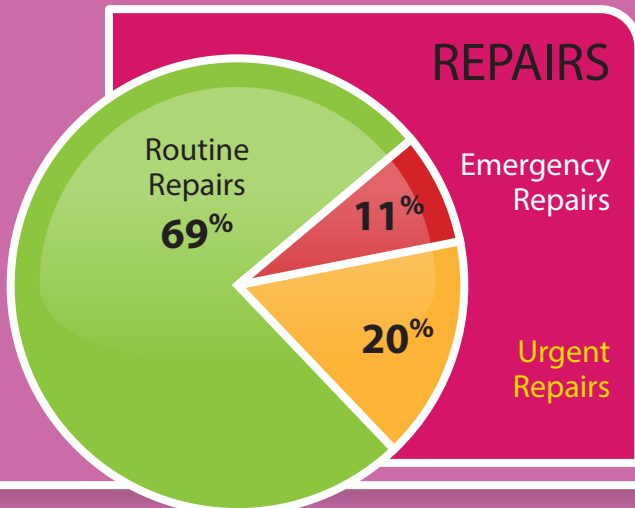


External Doors (Anglian)

33

Doors

REPAIRS



Emergency repairs completed on time

100%

Appointments kept

99.7%

Repairs completed at first visit

99.4%

Urgent repairs completed on time

99.9%

Routine repairs completed on time

99.6%



Mr S said – *Very happy with new wet room, this will make a lot of difference to us.*

Mr P said – *Nathan has completed putting up another bannister rail. Thank you, what a brilliant job he has done. He was very polite and efficient. This has helped tremendously.*

COVID SUPPORT DURING NATIONAL RESTRICTIONS

During November 2020 the Government issued further National Restrictions and so whilst our leisure centres closed, our panner market was reduced to essentials only, and some of the non-urgent repairs for our tenants had to be postponed, other areas of the council became a frenzy of increased activity.

Calls to our Covid support line increased, a new raft of business grants became available at short notice and many of our staff were redeployed to help our most vulnerable customers.

Our Revenues and Benefits and Economic Development teams received applications for both the Local Restrictions Grant Scheme and the Additional Restrictions Grants - new schemes that had launched. In the first 48 hours of launching we received more than 100 applications.

Our Covid support team, supported by our leisure and customer service staff, received many applications for our hardship fund in November 2020, and hadn't seen this volume of applications since the first lock down began in March.

The community team worked very hard to support those in our district who are classed as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable. The team were on hand to support people to ensure they could meet their basic needs such as receive prescriptions and have access to food deliveries and emotional support.

Our housing team, again assisted by leisure staff, commenced welfare checks on tenants and made many calls to those aged over 70 and others who may be considered vulnerable. There were also many more additional calls to other clients of the Council who receive a Lifeline alarm service.



COLLECTING RENT

Our team worked differently during 2020/21 in an effort to support those households who were having difficulty paying their bills. The Government put in place arrangements to support tenants to keep the roof over their heads by placing what they called a pause on possession proceedings and evictions. This meant that the Council was instructed not to refer cases to Court on the grounds of rent arrears. The ban on evictions continued into 2021/22.

The team made contact with those who owed rent to discuss their circumstances and to offer advice and information as appropriate. The Officers worked closely with the Council's Customer Welfare Officer and other agencies including the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to maximise incomes. We work as a partner with the DWP and are able to exchange information relating to claims for Universal Credit which helps us to support those who may be struggling with debt. Due to the restrictions on movement imposed by the Government during successive lockdowns, our team had to work with tenants in different ways and therefore we started using texts, emails and telephone conversations a lot more than we had previously. Phoenix House was closed at times and therefore we had to assist those who had been in the habit of visiting our office to make payments, to explore other ways of doing this.



We also funded a scheme, Wiser£money, to deliver specialist money and debt advice services. This service was free to tenants, impartial and confidential. The service offered money advice, made referrals to other agencies which could help and helped those in debt to access charitable grants where necessary.

Our approach was more collaborative and involved having open and honest conversations with those with money problems.

Mrs D said, I had been apprehensive about the visit due to the Covid 19 restrictions but the engineer was very professional and sensitive to this, having appropriate safety clothing, abiding by social distancing, etc.

Mrs H called in to say *Thank you for the reassuring letter sent from the Housing Team yesterday.*

Tenancy

Devon Home Choice



We've let: **131** properties, including new builds and properties purchased

Standard Void Properties **91** Re-Let

Average to Re-Let **68.1** Days

Major Void Properties **35** Re-Let

Average to Re-Let **103.4** Days



1,547 Registered Applicants

Our average tenant is **56** years old

2,949 Tenancies held

37.3% Dwelling Rent paid by DD



74.1% Garage Rent paid by DD



136

NEW ASB cases opened

Antisocial Behaviour



100%

CLOSED ASB cases



Lifeline Alarms

A Lifeline alarm provides help at the touch of a button **24 hours a day, 365 days a year**. The service provides peace of mind to people who feel at risk in their own homes. Please get in touch if you require any further information or you can visit our website: <https://bit.ly/3BXHC07>

Miss M emailed to say

Thank you for your concern and thanks for everything you have done for me in the past. You are a good housing officer and were understanding with my circumstances.

Communication



Text Messages

We received **75** compliments

We completed **83** complaints

and responded to

100% on time!

1,224 sent ad hoc

279 balance requests received

We received **75.4%** responses to new tenant satisfaction survey

92.6% were satisfied



Mr B said *"I am really pleased with the action you have taken and the way you have had open communication with me. This is a completely different way of dealing with Mid Devon District Council and has exceeded my expectations."*